



Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES.

THE CANDIDATE'S WEDDING.

By JAMES WORKMAN.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

DOUGLAS GRANT, barrister-at-law and parliamentary candidate for Southpool, was shaving in his dressing-room at the Royal Hotel on the morning of the polling-day.

He was a tall, broad-shouldered, well-built young man, with clear-cut features, crisp fair hair, quiet gray eyes, well-shaped mouth and chin, and a large yellow moustache. He was rather exceptionally good-looking; though an impartial observer might have doubted it as Grant stood glaring into the mirror with his mouth and nose on one side and his right cheek plastered with shaving-soap. A pronounced prejudice against being shaved by any one but himself was one of his small peculiarities.

'Come in,' he exclaimed, hearing a knock at the door.

A waiter thrust his head into the room.

'If you please, sir, Mr Barker wishes to see you immediately.'

Barker was Grant's election agent.

'Show him up,' said Douglas.

The waiter looked slightly scandalised.

'Show him up 'ere, sir?' he asked.

'Certainly.'

A minute afterwards Barker entered. He was tall and slight, wore spectacles, and had a thin, prim face and self-poised manner. Having raised himself in the social scale, he attached an exaggerated importance to propriety of speech and deportment. In his sedate black clothes, and with a shiny silk hat in his hand, he formed a curious contrast to the athletic young candidate who stood before the glass in his pyjamas, scraping industriously at his soapy cheek.

Barker stood hesitatingly near the door.

'Come in, come in,' said Douglas. 'Chuck those things off the chair and sit down.'

Barker carefully removed a waistcoat and a
No. 44.—VOL. I.

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pair of inexpressibles from the only chair, placed them on a towel-rail, and sat gingerly down.

'Well, what is it?' asked Douglas.

'I extremely regret to inform you that I have some very unpleasant news for you, Mr Grant.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Douglas, with a grimace; 'what's up now? Anything wrong in my speech last night? Whose corns have I trodden on now?'

'Will you pardon me asking if you have heard from Miss Meredith this morning?'

Douglas looked at him with a queer smile.

'No,' he rejoined. 'I could hardly expect to. I suppose she's engaged in the sacred mysteries of the toilet, and all that kind of thing. She has no time to think of anything masculine until she has made herself a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.'

Douglas was to be married that morning to Elsie Meredith, the daughter of the most popular and influential man in the district. It had been considered a happy idea that his marriage should take place on the polling-day, and that, as his enthusiastic supporters put it, the constituency should be presented to him as a wedding gift.

'Besides,' continued Douglas, 'I understand it's not quite the thing for me to see her until we meet at the church.'

'Ah!' said Barker meaningly. 'I'm afraid there's not much prospect of your doing that to-day, Mr Grant.'

'What the dickens do you mean?' asked the astonished Douglas. 'Oh, hang it all, man! out with it,' he continued, as Barker still hesitated. 'Don't beat about the bush, or try to break the news to me. I shan't go into hysterics. Out with it.'

'Then I am very sorry to inform you, Mr Grant, that Mr Meredith is in custody on a charge of—of embezzlement.'

OCT. 1, 1898.

'Meredith in custody on a charge of embezzlement!' exclaimed Douglas. 'Are you drunk, Barker, or have you taken leave of your senses?'

Barker got up with a very sour expression in his small eyes.

'I am not in the habit, Mr Grant'— he began.

'Very well, very well,' interrupted Douglas impetuously. 'I don't want to hurt your feelings, or anything of that kind; but for heaven's sake, man, don't waste any more time. Let me hear the particulars at once.'

'Mr Meredith, as you are perhaps aware,' said Barker, 'is the chairman of the Southpool Building Society, in which almost every man in the neighbourhood who has a few pounds to spare is more or less interested. Some of the poorer people have invested all their savings in it, solely on the strength of Mr Meredith's connection with it. A new auditor was recently appointed, and he went through the books yesterday. He discovered that the accounts had been systematically cooked for some time, and that many thousands of pounds—twenty, forty, fifty—I don't know the exact amount—had been made away with. The secretary was at once arrested. He confessed that he was guilty, but stated that he was merely a tool in the hands of the chairman, Mr Meredith; and Meredith was arrested this morning. He is now in custody at the police station.'

'Do you know all this as an absolute fact?' asked Douglas.

'I should not have ventured to repeat it if I had not done so,' replied Barker stiffly.

Douglas swiftly concluded his shaving, and began to wash and dress with the utmost rapidity.

'It was well the truth came out before the ceremony,' said Barker reassuringly. 'I think you'll be quite safe as it is. People will think you've been taken in as well.'

Douglas paused, hair-brush in hand, and eyed Barker with a peculiar expression.

'Will you have the goodness to explain what you mean?' he asked.

'When Meredith was taken to the police station,' said Barker, 'he was surrounded by a howling mob of half-frantic men and women, ruined shareholders of the Southpool Building Society, who wanted to lynch him. It took a dozen constables to keep them back. If you had'—

The expression in Douglas's eyes puzzled Barker, and he hesitated.

'Go on,' said Douglas.

'Well, if you had married Miss Meredith you simply wouldn't have the very slightest chance of becoming the member for Southpool.'

'Ah!' rejoined Douglas. 'Then I am afraid, Barker, that my chance of attaining that distinguished position is, to say the least of it, remote; for you may quite definitely make up

your mind to one thing, and that is, that whether I become the member for Southpool or not, I shall most certainly marry Miss Meredith.'

Barker turned pale.

'You will—will marry Miss Meredith?' he stammered.

'Certainly.'

'But not to-day—surely not to-day.'

'Not to-day?' repeated Douglas. 'Why, of course I shall marry her to-day. In the first place, I don't for one single moment believe Mr Meredith to be guilty. It's simply preposterous to bring such a charge against him. I've known him for years, and I never knew a more truthful, upright, honourable man. It's grotesquely absurd to accuse him of dishonesty. But even if I believed him to be guilty, do you suppose that anything her father might have done would induce me to shame and disgrace an innocent girl by turning my back upon her almost at the very door of the church?'

'But don't you see—don't you see,' stuttered Barker, 'that you will simply be committing suicide—social and political suicide? Hardly a man in Southpool will vote for Meredith's son-in-law. You won't have the ghost of a chance of being elected.'

'We'll see about that,' replied Douglas. 'I don't altogether agree with you. If there's one quality the average Englishman admires it's pluck. If there's one person the average Englishman despises it's a sneak. If I didn't marry Miss Meredith I should be a sneak, Barker; and there's not a man whose opinion is worth taking into account who wouldn't cut me dead, let alone voting against me, when he'd had time to think over it. In any case, you may take it for granted that the wedding will take place just as if nothing had happened.'

Pale with anger, Barker moved towards the door. He had regarded the election as a stepping-stone in his own career. If Grant were defeated, he would share in the disgrace of the defeat. He had strained every nerve to win the election, and success had appeared certain up to the moment of Meredith's arrest. Defeat was now a foregone conclusion, and his face grew livid with rage and disappointment.

'Look here, Barker,' said Douglas; 'I should like you to understand that I think this is very hard lines on you. You've worked like a brick—upon my word you have—and I hate to see a man lose the game by a fluke when he has played it as cleverly as you have. Still, I don't think the outlook is quite so black as you suppose; and, in any case, I shall expect you to stand by me to the end. You must give me your hand on that.'

He held out his hand with such a frank, good-humoured smile that Barker was compelled to take it, and even to thaw a little in spite of himself.

'Of course I shall do all I can, Mr Grant,' he said, with a shake of the head; 'but I know beforehand that nothing I can do will prevent you being at the bottom of the poll.'

'Well, we'll see—we'll see,' said Douglas cheerily. 'And, oh, by the way, look here. I've just had a telegram from my friend Wilson, who was going to act as my best-man. He's down with the influenza, and can't come. If you'll kindly excuse me asking you at such extremely short notice, I should be awfully obliged if you'd take his place.'

'But, my—my dear sir,' stammered Barker helplessly, 'I don't see how I can possibly do that when I—I so entirely disapprove of'—

'Pooh, pooh, my dear fellow! not another word,' exclaimed Grant. 'Of course you disapprove. Quite right, too, from your point of view. I should do the same thing myself. But I know you're far too good a fellow not to help me out of a fix like this. Come, it's a bargain—isn't it? Thanks, awfully. You're a brick. I knew I could depend on you.'

He fumbled in his waistcoat pocket, while Barker stood gazing at him too bewildered to expostulate.

'Here's the ring. You'll take charge of it—won't you? And, look here, you might just toddle over to the vicarage and tell the vicar he may expect us at eleven o'clock as arranged. We fixed an early hour so that I might have the rest of the day free. You will? Thanks awfully. See you again soon. Good-morning.'

As soon as Barker had disappeared, Douglas hurriedly finished dressing, snatched a hasty breakfast, and, escaping with difficulty from the clutches of the excited politicians who flocked round him to discuss the unexpected situation, drove at full speed to Oak Lodge, Mr Meredith's residence.

The man who opened the door wore an aspect of funereal gloom.

'Yes, sir,' he said, 'Miss Meredith's in, sir; and though she's not at 'ome to any one else, I suppose she'll see you, sir. I 'ope, sir, if you'll excuse me sayin' so, sir, as you'll be able to cheer her up a bit. It's heart-breakin' to see her, poor young lady. Even if the weddin' is haff, sir, the sight of you'll do her a heap of good, sir.'

'What in the world do you mean by talking like that?' exclaimed Douglas irritably.

'I—I'm sure I beg pardon, sir,' stammered the poor man. 'I meant no offence, sir.'

'Perhaps not. But what the dickens do you mean by the wedding being off?'

Brown gazed at him with a look of stupefaction.

'Why, 'aven't you heard what's 'appened, sir?' he gasped.

'Of course I've heard everything, my good man; but you may take my word for it that the wedding is not off. Do you understand?

The wedding is *not* off. Now, where is Miss Meredith?'

'She's in the library, sir.'

'Very well; I'll go there. You needn't come.'

Douglas strode across the hall, opened the door of the library, and went in.

A pretty young housemaid, plump and rosy-cheeked, whose eyes were red with sympathetic woe, popped out of an adjoining room.

'Did you hear him, Mary?' exclaimed Brown excitedly. 'He's a *man*—he is.'

'A man, indeed!' exclaimed Mary contemptuously. 'I call him a real gentleman.'

'It's the same thing, my dear,' said Brown. 'And now, look here, my girl; I don't agree with his views on the Heddication Question, and I don't consider him sound, as you may say, on matters relatin' to hagriculture; but I 'ave a vote for the cottage my old mother lives in, and that vote he shall have, and as many more as I can get him.'

'If you don't vote for him,' exclaimed Mary, 'I'll never, never speak to you again. Oh, I should like to hug him!'

'Would a hindividual of the name of Brown do instead, Mary?' asked the admiring footman.

In the meantime Douglas had discovered Elsie in a state of collapse on the library sofa, dishevelled, woe-begone, quivering with sobs, the most forlorn, pathetic-looking little object his eyes had ever rested upon. Fortunately for the success of his plans, discouragement had usually an exhilarating rather than a depressing effect on Douglas. Opposition quite cheered him up, and with the appearance of an apparently insurmountable obstacle he really began to enjoy himself. Otherwise he might have shrunk back aghast at the indignation which Elsie displayed at being married while 'her poor, dear papa' was locked up in the police station.

'I would never dream of doing it,' she exclaimed. 'I wonder you can suggest such a thing, Douglas. It is most cruel and heartless of you.'

'That's sheer nonsense, my dear girl,' said Douglas cheerfully. 'Why, if you go on in this way, shutting yourself up, crying your eyes out, breaking off your marriage, and all that sort of thing, do you know what people will begin to say?'

'I don't know, and I don't care,' said the girl wearily. 'What does it matter what they say?'

'Well, they will begin to say that you believe your father to be guilty.'

Elsie raised herself on her elbows and glared at Douglas with eyes that glittered fiercely through her tears.

'Douglas!'

'That's what people will say,' rejoined Douglas placidly.

'I tell you I know he is not guilty,' cried the girl passionately. 'He couldn't be guilty of such a thing.'

'Then act as if you believed in his innocence,' replied Douglas. 'Dry your eyes, and fix up your hair, and take it smiling, my dear. Then, if you'll sort of straighten yourself out and put your things on, we'll drive to St Jude's right away, and show the public of Southpool that there are at least two people who believe in the innocence of the best man I ever knew—Thomas Meredith, my future father-in-law.'

His words brought the colour to her cheeks. She sat up and began mechanically to arrange her ruffled locks.

'Where are your bridesmaids?' he asked.

'Their father sent a note,' faltered Elsie, 'saying that under the circumstances he—he hoped I'd excuse them.'

'The cad!' exclaimed Douglas. 'Well, we'll do without them. We'll introduce a new fashion. We'll drive to the church together. Jump into your things, my dear, and we'll start at once.'

'Jump into my things,' she repeated, with a tearful smile. 'Who ever heard of any one jumping into a wedding-dress. Oh, it's all so different from what I expected! I wish I had a mother or sister to advise me. Do you really think I'm doing right, Douglas? Do you think papa won't be hurt?'

'My dear child, he'll take it as the most convincing proof that we don't attach the slightest importance to this preposterous charge. Now do run away and get ready, like a good little girl.'

Elsie had hardly left the room when the footman appeared.

'Oh,' he said, 'I thought Miss Elsie was here, sir.'

'What is it?'

'Miss Ethel West would like to see her, if you please, sir.'

'Miss West! Good! Ask her to come in at once.'

Brown ushered in a bright, brisk-looking girl in a bicycling costume.

'Miss Ethel!' exclaimed Douglas, shaking her cordially by the hand. 'How fortunate! You're just the very person I wanted to see.'

'Indeed. Where's Elsie?'

'She's struggling into her things.'

'Struggling into her things!'

'Yes, yes; arraying herself in robes of dazzling white, and all that sort of thing. And, look here, I've got an immense favour to ask of you. I know it sounds awfully cheeky; but for Elsie's sake I'm sure you won't refuse. You've heard what has taken place? I thought so. Well, her bridesmaids have backed out. Their father won't let them come. Now, what I want to ask you is this—Don't you think that under the circumstances you could see your way to waive ceremony and act as her bridesmaid—eh? It would be awfully kind of you.'

'But you don't mean to say that you are really going on with the wedding?' exclaimed the astonished girl.

'Most certainly I am, and you'll act as Elsie's bridesmaid—won't you?'

'In this costume?' cried Ethel.

'My dear Miss Ethel,' rejoined Douglas, with his sweetest smile, 'nothing could possibly look more becoming.'

'I couldn't do it, Mr Grant,' exclaimed Ethel, with a horrified glance at her short tweed skirt. 'The thing's impossible. I really couldn't.'

'My dear young lady,' said Douglas, 'think of poor Elsie. Suppose you were in her place. Suppose that those you had loved and trusted gave you the cold shoulder and turned their backs on you, wouldn't you appreciate the loyalty and affection of the true friend who stood by you in your hour of need; who cared nothing for the sneers and smiles and shrugs of any man or woman if she could prove her faith in you and love for you, by helping you when you most needed her assistance? That's the kind of friend you'll prove, Miss Ethel, I know. I was sure of it the moment I heard your name announced. You will—won't you? Thanks awfully. Now, do go and help poor Elsie to struggle into her things.'

'But, Mr Grant,' expostulated Ethel as, taking her gently by the arm, he led her towards the door, 'I—I—really I—oh! it's all so dreadfully unconventional.'

'Yes, yes,' admitted Douglas, 'it is. But it's just by doing unconventional things at a moment like this that we best prove our loyalty and affection.'

The girl stood hesitating for a moment at the door he had opened for her. Then she impulsively held out her hand.

'I didn't think that any power on earth would induce me to act as a bridesmaid in a bicycling costume,' she said; 'but I'd do that and more for any one who has shown such loyalty to the girl he loves as you, Mr Grant. I think Elsie ought to be the happiest girl in the world.'

'She ought indeed,' said Douglas cordially, 'when she has such a sincere and affectionate friend as you, Miss Ethel. Do make her hurry up. We'll only just have time to get to the church.'

In a phenomenally short space of time Elsie appeared in a dainty travelling dress, the most bewitching little bride, so he assured her, that ever stepped into a church. His enthusiasm was not wholly the outcome of an imagination inspired by love. The pale, refined, clear-cut little face, with its deep, luminous gray eyes, and halo of rippling gold, seemed to glimmer like a star in the dusky library. His pride and delight in her flushed her pale cheeks with a delicate rose, and with a lighter heart than she had felt since her father's arrest she took his arm and stepped almost cheerfully to the carriage.

In a few moments they were driving rapidly towards Southpool. Douglas had almost, and

Elsie perhaps altogether, forgotten about the election; but as the carriage rolled through the crowd collected before Douglas's committee-room, a sudden storm of hoots and hisses, and the sight of angry faces and brandished sticks, caused Elsie to start violently like one awakened out of a dream.

'Oh Douglas!' she cried, 'I had forgotten. Oh, how selfish I have been, thinking of myself

and papa, and forgetting all about you and the election! You must not marry me, Douglas; you shall not—not to-day, not before papa is proved innocent. If you do you will not be elected, and I should be the most miserable girl in the world. I could not endure it; I could never forgive myself. You must get out at once. You must leave me at once, and tell the coachman to drive back.'

THEN AND NOW: 1798-1898.



HE difference between our homes and surroundings and the houses and environments of a hundred years ago is sufficiently wide to satisfy the most exacting lover of startling contrasts. The state of things—social, religious, educational, commercial, political, and international—is so much in our favour that it seems scarcely worth while seriously comparing it with the condition of life that prevailed in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of King George the Third, the 'Farmer Monarch,' who lost us America, who was filled with honest wonder as to how the apple got into the dumpling, and who used to dip himself in the sea at Weymouth whilst a military band, stationed at a becoming distance, played 'God save the King' as he took his first plunge! Weighed fairly in the balances, the present year of grace makes 1798 'kick the beam.'

Yet there is a Debtor and Creditor side to the account. The past was not altogether without its advantages and compensations. Life was less complex, competition less keen, human wants were more simple, and rival interests not so exacting and arbitrary as they are to-day, when our population is more numerous and more closely packed, when the scale of everything is rising, and social requirements change every day their conditions and proportions. Our great-grandfathers took more solid views of life than their descendants. Semblance was not accepted for substance. Adulteration, false marking, and the coating and loading of textile fabrics to make textures of shadowy thinness heavy and seemingly stout and serviceable were unknown. Plausibility had not come into fashion. There was more respect paid to the aged; more real affection existed amongst relations and friends. Truthfulness and honour were not considered out of date. Sincerity had not sought refuge from the shams of Society. The phrase *fin-de-siècle* had not been invented for the eighteenth century. The affected, Talleyrand gospel of *surtout point de zèle* was not adopted by an invertebrate *jeunesse dorée*.

Let us turn back the fingers of the clock of time till they point to the figures 1798. There was a rebellion in Ireland. England was at war

with France. To furnish food for powder the recruiting sergeant was assisted by the press-gang. We were fighting both by land and sea. In 1798 Nelson won the battle of the Nile and broke the ocean-power of Napoleon. The land campaigns of Wellington had freed the Peninsula. But the slave-trade in our colonies flourished. The printing-machine was a mere hand-press. There were no cabs or omnibuses. Steam locomotion belonged to thirty years after date. Cycling was an uncoined word. The Tests and Corporation Acts were unrepealed. The Roman Catholic Relief Bill had not passed. There was no voting by ballot. Pocket-boroughs flourished; political debauchery was rampant. There was no police-force. Superstition reigned supreme; every village had its 'wise woman' and fortune-teller. Duels were common; so were diabolical outrages at sea. Men were executed for high treason, forgery, and horse-stealing. Hanging, drawing, and quartering were the cherished punishments of the criminal code. The hemp crop was the most flourishing and fruitful of harvests. The gibbet-post cast its baneful shadow over the land. Public executions were a popular outdoor entertainment provided by the State for the edification of the people. Suicides were buried without the offices of religion at the meeting of four cross-roads, with a stake through their hearts. Women were openly flogged. There was a public brand for scolds. Whipping-posts and stocks were prominent in every town and village. Women were placed in the pillory and pelted by the populace with rotten eggs, putrid vegetables, and the like. Flogging was of frequent occurrence in the army; deserters were incontinently shot; seamen were summarily hanged at the yard-arm for mutiny. Even penny news-rooms had their persecutions and martyrs. On the 6th of September 1798, six informations were heard before the magistrates at Bow Street, and laid by the Stamp Office, against a Mr Williams for suffering in his room in Old Round Court sundry persons to read the *Daily Advertiser* and other newspapers for the consideration of one penny each. The offence being held to be clearly made out, the infamous Williams was convicted in the penalty of five pounds on each information!

The jails were noisome dens, in which some thousands of French prisoners of war were incarcerated. Our present prisons are, in comparison, so many cleanly and commodious hydropathic establishments, with a gymnasium in the shape of the treadmill. There was then no waste in workhouses. Bumbledom held despotic sway. The 'unions' were full of squalid, sordid, repulsive misery. Mrs Gamp was the type of many of the coarse, ignorant, thieving, drunken beldames who did duty as 'nurses.' Lunacy one hundred years ago was treated as a crime. The poor insane were systematically exhibited to the public, chained to the wall like wild beasts, and excited to rage to make the spectacle more enjoyable, at a charge of twopence per visit.

Working-men literally worked in those days. They never kept St Monday. They even put work into their play. Some of their nineteenth-century successors reverse the process. The old operatives earned their bread by the sweat of their brow. If a factory-hand was seen to perspire to-day he would be instantly disowned by his trades union. The modern labourer, too, is an adept in the art of letting his pick drop listlessly on the ground with its own weight, and of stopping to contemplate things in general after every half-dozen strokes. If he hears the dinner-bell or the dismissal whistle sound when his hammer has ascended, he will bring it down without touching the nail or metal beneath, for fear of giving his employer one more movement of muscle than is his due. The writer has reliable record of a bricklayer's labourer who, with a hod of mortar on his head, being three-parts up a lofty ladder, and, hearing the clock strike the dinner-hour, carried the load down again, sooner than deliver it at the top in his own time.

A hundred years ago the hours were long, the occupations laborious, the wages low, the holidays few. Yet there were no 'strikes;' no conflicts between capital and labour; no professional agitators clamouring for nine hours' pay for eight hours' work; no philanthropic gentleman expert in the pretty art of putting public trust money to private purposes; few financiers whose speculations should be spelled without the letter 's.' Company promoting had not been developed into one of the exact sciences; and unknown were those subtle Stock Exchange operations whereby men grow enormously rich by buying with nothing and selling for a great sum, or by buying what there is none of, and selling what does not exist.

It was a time of conscientious shopkeeping. The season of 'Alarming Sacrifices' had not set in. The tradesman relied on his well-filled shelves and the quality of his wares, and not upon sensational advertisements, monthly clearance sales, winter remnant sales below cost price, showy windows, plate-glass, gas, and glitter. His goods were not ticketed in the window; the three-farthings device he would have regarded with

repugnance. He would certainly have resented a plea of abatement as a personal insult, and the sight of the 'slop-shop' goods of to-day would have caused his sudden death. There were no Socialists with 'yearnings for equal division of unequal earnings,' men 'who are willing to fork out their penny and pocket your shilling.' The legal axiom of *caveat emptor* did not then apply to our mercantile morality.

A hundred years ago green fields smiled under a blue sky and a buoyant atmosphere where are now grimy factories and an air that is dense and dark enough to be dynamited; wharves and warehouses cover ground that was once dotted with great trees that made islands of grateful shade in a sea of grass. Streams that were once ribbons of liquid light, with dimpling pools and chattering runs, and with water-ouzels' nests in cool crevices, and rivers that erst reflected ferns and wild-flowers and foliage, or had foamy weirs and leisurely water-wheels tossing and splashing prismatic sunlight, are now channels of ink and stink so malodorous that if you were to fall into them you would escape death by drowning only to die from the effects of the poisoned water which you had swallowed during your immersion. In 1798, if our houses were not altogether sanitary, they were, for the most part, substantial and comfortable, and like the 'brave kirk' described by Andrew Fairservice, the shrewd Scottish gardener in *Rob Roy*—'nane o' yer whig-maleerries, and curlic-wurlies, and open-steek hems about it—a solid, weel-jointed mason-work, that will stand as lang as the world—keep hands an' gunpowther aff it.' They did not resemble those 'desirable residences' that Mr Jerry, the builder, is speculatively erecting to-day; the frail tenements through whose diaphanous walls one can hear all the domestic transactions that are taking place next door, from the coughing of an invalid to the crying of an infant, the ticking of a clock, the poking of a fire, and the strumming of a piano; 'the very eligible semi-detached villas'—with a strong flavour of putty and Building Society about them—where you may participate (without being present) in family dissensions and family devotions, hear Mrs Caudle's 'curtain lectures,' and the snoring of poor Caudle himself, unsuccessfully simulating sleep, meanwhile his irate spouse, whose very glance is so acutely acidulated that she could pickle cucumbers by merely looking at them, proceeds with her nocturnal admonitions.

The working-man's menu in 1798 seldom included butcher's meat. The toilers and moilers did not often have placed before them their rasher of bacon. The rich kept all the feasts; the poor observed all the fasts. Wheat was fifty shillings per quarter. In times of bad harvest agricultural labourers could not get meal to make porridge with, and in some of the worse-off rural districts they ate nothing

but boiled nettles and garden stuff, and even in winter had scarcely anything but stolen turnips. Farmers put steel traps in the mouths of their corn-sacks, and not a few famished men left their fingers 'in chancery.' Very applicable to that penurious period are the words of Tennyson's 'Northern Farmer':

Tis'n them as 'as munny as breäks into 'ouses an' steäls,
Them as 'as coüts to their backs an' taäkes their regular meäls.

Noä, but it's them as niver knaws wheer a meäl's to be 'ad.

Taäke my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is bad.

But, bad as the times were, there was in aristocratic circles much squandering of money at high play. My lady was as reckless as my lord, and rattled the dice-box and shuffled the cards from dusk till morning, going home with ruined fortunes, in her sedan-chair, when workmen were going home from lathe and loom to breakfast. Family diamonds and jewels and plate were staked when the guineas were exhausted, and when these possessions had gone farms and estates were sacrificed. The amusements, too, of wealthy people were of a coarse and cruel description. Rat-worrying, cock-fighting, and badger-baiting were favourite diversions. Prize-fighting was regarded as essential to keep up the courage of Englishmen. Even the clergy joined in these low and brutal pastimes and neglected their spiritual duties, or cut short a Sunday afternoon service sooner than miss being present at a main of cocks or seeing two men entering the ring for the express purpose of pummelling one another, breaking ribs, damaging noses, knocking out teeth, and cracking jaws. The devotional life of the Church was distinguished by all the dull apathy that prevailed during the Georgian period; the sacred edifices were dormitories for the living as well as of the dead; but the work of Whitefield and the two brothers Wesley had helped to breathe new life into the dry bones of the Establishment. There were sects upon sects, orthodox and unorthodox—Muggletonians and Southcottians, Behmenists and Swedenborgians, Sandemanians and Bereans, Buchanites and believers in Richard Brothers, Moravians, Maxfieldians, and followers of the Countess of Huntingdon.

There was no flaunting, flag-waving jingoism a hundred years ago, but healthy, hearty, patriotic songs of the Charles Dibdin character, which aided the manning of the British navy to a remarkable extent. Short service was unknown in the army, whose stamina was much superior to that of our home army of to-day, with its slight, short lads of deficient physique. The recruits of 1898 are no longer drawn from the rural districts. The healthy yeomen, sinewy and strong, full of bone and firm of flesh, who once filled the ranks of English regular regiments, have been driven off the land by agricultural depression, and gone into

overcrowded and unhealthy towns to make more strenuous the battle for bread.

A hundred years ago there were no temperance societies or Bands of Hope, no Rechabites and Blue Ribbon Army. To be as 'drunk as a lord' was the height of human felicity. It was the age of 'three-bottle men,' of convivial toasts, of drinking-songs. Even the Church indirectly encouraged intemperance. There were certain districts where at Whitsuntide the churchwardens were accustomed to levy contributions of malt from the parishioners. This was brewed into strong ale and sold in the church. The Whitsuntide toppers had, however, a pious method in their madness. The money spent on the beer was expended by the churchwardens in church maintenance, and the muddled roisterers no doubt believed themselves to be pillars of the Church even when, under the influence of its alcohol, they rolled upon its pavement. They thought themselves supporters of the Church when they wanted 'supporting' themselves, and deemed themselves most saintly when they were most soddened. Until as recently as 1827 (when the license was withdrawn) a church and public-house were covered by one roof at Deepdale, midway between Derby and Nottingham. A door that could be opened at will served to separate the consecrated interior of the church from the common taproom of the tavern! Tea-drinking was regarded as one of the feminine vices of a hundred years ago. *The Female Spectator* of that period observes: 'The tea-table costs more to support than would maintain two children at nurse. It is the utter destruction of all economy, the bane of good housewifery, and the source of idleness.'

A hundred years ago there were no institutions for the blind, the deaf and dumb, the paralytic and idiotic. There were few lying-in hospitals, no orphanages, no homes for fallen women, no nurses' institutes, no convalescent homes, no infirmaries for children, no special hospitals for women, for consumption and chest diseases, for fever, for nervous disorders, for epilepsy, paralysis, ophthalmic cases, and eruptions of the skin. The benefits conferred by almshouses went by favour, and charity trusts were most shamefully 'jobbed.' There were no trained nurses, no corps to render 'first aid.' No chloroform or other anæsthetics softened the pain of the operative knife and saw. Lord Lister had not introduced antiseptics into surgery. There were no Röntgen X-rays, with their marvellous surgical, anatomical, and pathological appliances that enable the surgeon to study bone-disease and the detection of foreign bodies in various parts of the human frame. We can now send our hearts as easily as our watches to be cleaned and repaired, and savants can examine by the new photography our inner works, scrutinise our mainsprings, adjust our mechanism, and regulate our movements!

In 1798 there were no Young Men's or Young Women's Christian Associations; no organisation of

charitable work; no emigration schemes. Feeble oil-lamps made the darkness visible, for it was not until 1819 that Rudolph Ackermann's house in London was lighted with gas, and people were wont to walk on the other side of the street so as not to be too near the dangerous combustible. Experimental researches had yet to be made in magnetism. Vaccination had been successfully tried by Jenner, but was as yet little known. Every other person one met was disfigured with the smallpox. Indecent prints abounded. Among the lower classes a low grade of morality prevailed. It was very common for the baptismal service to follow closely the wedding ceremony; while the number of 'chance children'—as illegitimate offspring were called—revealed a shocking state of society.

There were no womanly occupations for women. To-day the avenues of paying employment for females are abundant, and the businesses and professions in which the 'fair sex' may earn money are so prolific as to make the selection of a pursuit quite an embarrassing one. Eve has entered the industrial field in competition with Adam, and he can no longer make fun of the woman's movement. He is confronted with lady doctors, lady journalists, lady typewriters, lady clerks, lady lecturers, lady editors and authors. Very much accentuated nowadays is Tom Moore's couplet:

Disguise our bondage as we will,
'Tis woman, woman rules us still.

Many things that are now accessible to the poorest were a century ago only within reach of the rich. Articles that were regarded as luxuries are now looked upon as every-day necessities. Only too often the stomachs of 'hands' in towns and hinds in villages, like Oliver Twist, asked 'for more.' The New World did not redress the food-balance of the Old. The frozen flesh and fruit of Australia, and the grain and other produce of Canada and the United States, belonged to the future.

'*Sanitas sanitatum omnia sanitas*' was a maxim that had not been recognised by the legislature.

The common people had no inkling of the great Palmerstonian truth that 'dirt is matter in its wrong place.' There were no boards of health, no inspectors of nuisances, no sanitary appliances. Disinfectants and chloride of lime would have been regarded with apprehension. It might have been said:

The cottage homes of England,
How fearfully they smell!
There's fever in the cesspool
And sewage in the well.

There was no scientific farming; no Minister of Agriculture; old-world methods of tilling the soil, almost as primitive as those of Triptolemus, with his wooden plough and yoke of bullocks, prevailed. The crops were treated very differently to the manner in which they are treated to-day, when there are patented machines for winnowing and tedding, and reaping, and mowing, and threshing; when we do not even allow our horses to take rough hay into their mouths, but chop it up and refine it for them until it can be comfortably masticated in delicate morsels.

A list as long as Leporello's catalogue, or an Irish law-suit, or a Corsican feud, and as varied as a bill of lading, or an auctioneer's inventory, or a railway company's lost luggage advertisement, might be made of 'Things that have Come In' during the last hundred years; while an enumeration of 'Things that have Gone Out' would make a very comprehensive schedule.

The Present has distanced the Past both in science and art, mechanical appliances, and material advances in such a marked manner that it is not worth while to place them. Eclipse is first, and the rest nowhere. The rate of mortality tells its own tale. It shows—as Lord Macaulay points out—that people live longer now, because they are better fed, better lodged, better clothed, and better attended in sickness. Capital has found its most lucrative course; commodities command their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, and idleness and folly their proper punishment.

THE SHIP-BREAKERS.

A FENLAND ROMANCE.

By THOMAS ST E. HAKE.

CHAPTER IX.—SUSPECTED.

JARVIS grasped his hand-bag and started up from his seat. All sense of fatigue was gone. He stepped briskly across the waiting-room; but before he could reach the door it was opened from the outside, and

Lawyer Burtenshaw came in.

'John? The very man I'm looking for. Why, what's the matter?'

'Didn't you see him?' was John's counter-question.

Mr Burtenshaw nodded. 'I saw him,' said he in an underbreath. 'Let him be. He's going home.'

'Going home? But'—

'Let him be,' Mr Burtenshaw reiterated, laying his hand on John's arm; 'let him go home.'

If Lawyer Burtenshaw had said, 'I've weaved

the web; let him entangle himself in the meshes,' his meaning could not have been made clearer to Jarvis. He had hardly spoken when the train for Cablethorpe came into the station.

'My gig's outside,' said Mr Burtenshaw. 'I'll drive you to the cross-roads. You'll be home before the fellow, or, at any rate, nearly as soon. Come.'

There was no time for vacillation. Jarvis promptly decided.

'I'll go with you,' said he.

Jarvis took his seat in the gig beside Mr Burtenshaw, and they went flying along the highway. The railway-station was about midway between this spot and the town of Cablethorpe. Night hung over the fenland like a pall.

'You know why Gabriel Beek is going home?' said Mr Burtenshaw.

'No. And yet,' said Jarvis suddenly, 'I suspect—— Did you see the look he gave me?'

'What was it like?' said the lawyer evasively.

'Fiendish!'

Mr Burtenshaw burst into a fit of laughter. With a startled turn of the head Jarvis glanced round; but he could see nothing of the lawyer's features, merely the dimmest outline of his figure in the gloom.

'Not bad, John,' Mr Burtenshaw answered, recovering himself. 'Not bad. I suspect you're right.'

The shriek of a railway-engine struck upon their ears, and the distant rumble of a train echoed across the fens.

'Mr Burtenshaw,' said Jarvis, 'this may be the last chance I have of talking to you, except'——

'What! You don't seriously think you're threatened, do you?'

'Threatened? Why, no. I was thinking at the moment,' said John, 'about that mortgage. Give yourself no further trouble'——

Mr Burtenshaw touched John's shoulder. 'Excuse me. But was it wise to bring the sum with you in that bag?'

'What do you mean?'

'Why, my friend,' said the lawyer, 'do you think I'm blind? I guessed when I saw you alight from the London train at the junction what you'd been to town about; and the way you caught up your bag when that fellow Gabriel appeared at the waiting-room window confirmed my surmise. So you're going to throw me over, John, are you?'

'I am going to try,' said John.

Again the shriek of the engine was heard. Next moment the glare of a huge incandescent fire came creeping through the night, keeping, as it appeared, in a parallel line with the light from Mr Burtenshaw's gig lamps. The space between the lights may have been a mile or more, and they had the appearance of carrying on a race, the goal being Cablethorpe. The lights of the town were visible two miles or

more ahead. No further words were exchanged between the men until Mr Burtenshaw drew up at the 'Cross' inn, at a corner of the cross-roads. Almost at the same time the train came to a stop at the station before Cablethorpe.

'You'll reach home first after all,' the lawyer predicted.

Jarvis stepped down into the road.

'You're not afraid of him?' said the lawyer.

'Gabriel Beek? Not I.'

'Well, good-night.'

Jarvis struck into the road for Cablethorpe. The gig lights flew along the road at right angles; and presently the engine lights moved out of the station. As Jarvis hastened on his way in the darkness, the lights on either side of him kept in sight.

There was some one at Cablethorpe at this moment of the night who watched anxiously for John's coming. It was Ruth. She was lying upon the sofa in the little parlour, as she was wont to do more frequently of late, by no light but the light of the fire. Since the night upon which Jarvis had saved Tudway's life, her hope that John might realise how futile it was to think of Hettie had begun to revive. Would he ever think of her—ever gain the faintest conception how deep was her love for him?

She listened for his footsteps. The hour had surely gone by when the last train from London is due at Cablethorpe. John had sent Hettie a telegram that afternoon: 'All goes well; shall return to-night.' He was a man upon whom one might rely implicitly.

Still no footstep in the timber-yard reached her ear. Ruth began to grow restless. Yet, stay! what was that? The sound of a footstep at last—a footstep in the yard that she instantly recognised. But not John's quick, energetic tread. It was a slow, heavy tread; it was the step of her truant brother Gabriel.

Ruth sank back like one who loses all volition. His shadow was at this moment thrown across the windows by the light from the office opposite. He was entering by the back way—coming home as it had always been his habit to come—without sign or warning. His step was in the passage now; and in another moment the parlour door opened, and Gabriel Beek came slouching in. He flung himself into an arm-chair beside the fire with an air of weariness, without looking round him. Had he looked about the room, as any stranger would have done, he would possibly have seen Ruth crouching on the sofa in the uncertain light. She lay there hardly breathing, with her large bright eyes fixed wonderingly upon him.

It was her dream. Ruth recalled every detail of it, just as she had related it to Hettie when awakened upon the first night of the terrible storm. His face and figure were fitfully lit up

by the wreck-wood fire. It gave an expression to his face of grim, silent laughter. Whether he was dressed like a tramp, or whether his clothes were begrimed with mud, she could not determine; but she almost expected, as the moments went by, to see him take a bundle of bank-notes from his pocket, as she had seen him in her dream, and send them fluttering over the blaze like so many bits of useless flimsy.

But nothing of the sort happened. Gabriel settled himself comfortably in the chair, as Ruth had often seen him do after a day from home, and fell fast asleep. She recovered volition. The painful sense of being without power of speech or motion left her. She rose and went softly from the room, and hurried out to look for Hettie. As she crossed the yard she caught sight of Tudway through the window of the timber warehouse. He was seated upon some planks near a stove, smoking his pipe. He came to her at the door, leaning on his stick. There was a lantern in his hand. He noticed that she was breathless and unusually pale.

'Gabriel has come home,' she whispered. 'Where is Hettie?'

'Isn't she in the office?'

'No'—and Ruth peered over her shoulder—'the lights in the office are out.'

Tudway consulted his watch. 'Why, it's half-past eleven.'

'Half-past eleven?' cried Ruth. 'John should have been back long ago.'

They regarded each other with anxious looks.

'Come,' said Tudway, 'let's go and speak to Gabriel.'

Ruth took the lantern, and led the way into the house. Tudway followed. When they entered the parlour they were surprised to find Hettie standing over the fire in a thoughtful attitude, and alone.

'Have you seen him?' said Ruth, still in a whisper.

'Yes. Gabriel is tired,' said Hettie, who showed no sign of uneasiness; 'he has gone to his room. I have not questioned him about himself,' she added, noticing Ruth's uneasy look, however; 'he's not in the mood to-night. You know how taciturn and stubborn he is at the best of times.'

'Did he come by train?' said Tudway.

Hettie had not inquired.

'But, Hettie, you might at least have asked him,' said Ruth, 'whether he had seen anything of John.'

While she spoke the gate-bell clanged loudly. Ruth, who still held the lantern in her hand, went out. Her heart beat fast, for she was seized with a sudden dread that something had happened to Jarvis, and that some one had come in haste to break the news. She opened the little doorway in the gate and looked out.

A tall man, in a heavy driving-coat, and muffled

up to his eyes in a woollen scarf, stood before her. A gig was being led under the archway into the stable-yard of the 'Jolly Bacchus.' Ruth raised the lantern and peered into his face.

It was Lawyer Burtenshaw.

'How d'ye do, Miss Ruth?' said he in his most plausible manner. 'Is our friend at home?'

'Who?'

'John Jarvis. I want particularly to see him.'

'We are expecting him. He went to London,' said Ruth, 'this morning. We are expecting him every minute.'

'Not back yet? Why, I met him at Willoughby Junction a couple of hours ago, and—'

'Met him at Willoughby Junction?'

'Yes. Let me in,' said the lawyer; 'let me in.'

He brushed by her, and hastened across the timber-yard towards the house. Ruth went quickly after him. As they came in Hettie stepped forward. 'What is the matter?' she asked.

Mr Burtenshaw stood up in front of the fire with his usual air of proprietorship, and said: 'I've no wish to alarm you, but I'm afraid John has been rather foolhardy to-night.'

Ruth had seated herself in such a position that she could study Mr Burtenshaw's face without being observed by him. She rested her elbows on the table, and shaded her face with her hand, for she feared to betray the intense anxiety his words were causing her.

'It has never been a secret that I know of,' the lawyer went on, 'that John Jarvis and your brother Gabriel are at daggers drawn. While your father was alive, Miss Beek, there was no open quarrel between them. Since his death they've kept apart. But they met again to-night.'

'Where?'

'At Willoughby Junction. No word was spoken between them,' said Mr Burtenshaw, 'but I saw them looking at each other through the waiting-room window—John within, Gabriel outside. I instantly perceived the danger. Gabriel's look was angry. I was warned, and I hastened to carry John off in my gig. Then'—he glanced searchingly round the room—'I left him at the cross-roads.'

Hettie betrayed signs of growing restlessness.

'Miss Beek,' the lawyer resumed, 'when you tell me that Jarvis has not come home, and I think of the ill-feeling that has existed for years between the two men, I fully realise the mistake I have made. I can't think what possessed me when I let John go one step alone. It was thoughtless in the extreme. When I had driven a mile or two I got fidgety. I turned back, but I saw nothing of him along the road. What can have become of him?'

For a moment no word was spoken. Mr Burtenshaw buttoned his coat tightly about him.

'John had a big sum of money with him, as I've no doubt you know,' said he, 'and in my opinion he has been robbed and— Well, we shall see. When I recall the look on your brother Gabriel's face as he watched John through the window at Willoughby Junction, my suspicions seem almost confirmed.'

Ruth's head dropped upon her arm. The lawyer's words had roused terror at her heart. Mr Burtenshaw went out; and Tudway and Hettie, after speaking together in a whisper, followed him to the 'Bacchus' inn. The awful thought had crossed Ruth's mind that Gabriel, in the hatred he had fostered for Jarvis for years past, had now waylaid him along the lonely fenland road, and had struck him down. It was the thing he had threatened to do. She recalled his look, his angry words, at Nelson Square.

She sat drooping there, faint from a sense of sickening horror at the very thought of what might have happened. But when her strength returned she rose quickly; and, to her surprise, she saw her brother Gabriel standing upon the hearth-rug, where Lawyer Burtenshaw had stood a few minutes ago, with his look bent curiously upon her. The moment she fixed her startled eyes upon him, he turned away his head and looked down.

The lantern which Ruth had brought in with her still remained on the table at her side. She took it up, and hurried towards the door.

'Stop!' said Gabriel, suddenly looking up. 'What's that crowd about outside the "Bacchus"? The noise they're making woke me up. I saw

that scoundrel Burtenshaw among them. What does it all mean?'

Ruth had opened the door while he still spoke, and the sound of many voices, echoing in the timber-yard, struck upon her ear.

'Ask yourself what it means,' said she.

Gabriel stepped quickly towards her and caught her by the wrist.

'I will be answered!'

Ruth trembled with horror at her brother's touch.

'John has been robbed—murdered, for all we can tell—by some one, between Cablethorpe and the "Cross" inn.'

'When?'

'An hour ago.'

'Who did it?'

'You know best.'

'I?'

'Was it not you?' said Ruth.

Gabriel loosened his hold upon her wrist, and staggered back as though he had received a stab. The moment she was released Ruth ran out. He saw the flash of her lantern at the window as she crossed the yard, and then the voices of the crowd outside the 'Jolly Bacchus'—angry voices, as they seemed to him—again smote upon his ear.

He was being pursued. This was Lawyer Burtenshaw's doing. That was Gabriel's thought, and the look of a demon crossed his face. Then he raised the window-sash and climbed out; and in a moment he had dropped noiselessly into the yard beneath. He went over a foot-bridge into a field; and here he struck into a narrow path-way beside a broad dike, and was soon lost in the darkness.

STEAM LINE-FISHING.



THE comparatively new industry of steam line-fishing is, as far as its methods of working are concerned, probably little understood by the majority of consumers of fish-food; most people's idea of line-fishing being the operation as carried on by the small yawls, the crews of which put out to sea for a few hours only, returning from their short voyage with a glittering freight of fresh and caller fish. The steam line-boats, on the contrary, are handsomely equipped vessels, the latest specimens being of some 120 tons gross register, and built of steel, to class 100 A1 at Lloyd's. The engines are compound surface condensing, of 300 indicated horse-power, with a steel multitubular boiler, having a working pressure of 140 lb. steam. These boats are fitted with fish-rooms, shelved for about eighty score of cod, ling, and halibut; ponds on deck for skate and saith, &c.; ice-rooms to hold from four to five

tons; and bunkers capable of holding some forty tons of coal, sufficient for a three weeks' cruise. The cabin accommodation is of the most comfortable description, and the vessels are ketch-rigged, and furnished with a strong seaworthy boat and all necessary appliances for use in cases of emergency. Each vessel carries from 4000 to 5000 hooks attached to many miles of lines. The cost of each of these steam-liners would be from £2500 to £3000. Although the work of baiting so many hooks and casting out and hauling in so many miles of lines is a very arduous one, requiring hours of constant labour in the twenty-four, not to speak of the storing of the fish in layers of ice, the vessels are kept in perfect order by the fishermen, more especially the beautiful machinery of the engine-rooms. The bill of fare is of the best, and a good cook is kept on every boat. The crew consists generally of seven or eight men, including the skipper.

A word as to the financing of these boats may not be unacceptable. The early system of financing the improved vessels which succeeded the small and crude steam-liners of eight or ten years ago was in some ways unsatisfactory to the fishermen who engaged in it. As the new method caught on, however, and the fishermen began to get interested in it, those of them who had spare capital by them, as fishermen generally have, joined in the purchase of a boat, sharing the profits among themselves after defraying all expenses of coals, oil, bait, &c., as well as the wages of engineer and fireman, from the proceeds of the sale of fish. The results have in many instances been eminently satisfactory, some of the boats having been estimated to have cleared in a year an average profit of from £500 to £700 on the original outlay of, say, £3000, after all expenses were paid—not a bad income as incomes go in these days for each of the five or six fishermen. Even when their capital was insufficient for the purchase of a boat, as was not unusual in the case of the younger men, service on a steam-liner they found to be more remunerative, safer, and more comfortable than was their former experience on board the yawls. As to the popularity of steam line-fishing among the fishermen themselves, frequent interviews with line-fishermen, not only in several of the villages of Kincardineshire, such as Findon, Portlethen, Muchals, Newtonhill, and Cove, as well as the skippers and men of boats at Aberdeen Fish Market, leave no shadow of doubt. Both men and women too have spoken with enthusiasm of the benefits of service on board steam line-boats, and the speedy extinction as fishing centres of the east-coast villages.

When asked the reason of such depopulation, the line-fishers give the harbour, the market, the auction sales, the fine steam line-boats ('line' boats, be it noted, *not* trawlers), as powerful enough attractions to draw all the young men and the middle-aged to Aberdeen to 'better themselves' with the rest, and share the luck that is going. The women too participate in the advantages of steam line-fishing. The weary and toilsome drudgery which erstwhile had to be undertaken by the womenfolk of the hardy toilers of the deep, such as curing the fish and carrying them about the country or into town in creels, which ordinary men, not to say women, could hardly lift; and the wading into the sea up to the neck for bait, &c. (all of which required a lifelong training—that being, in fact, the reason why fishermen as a rule marry only within their own class), are not required of the wives of steam line-fishermen. Now the fish are at once given into the hands of the salesmen, the bait is supplied wholesale by the owners, or, in the case of herring-bait, caught by the fishermen far out at sea, and the fish are cured and converted into 'Finnan' and other 'haddies' in the curers' yards with all up-to-date aids to labour. The picturesque fisherwife, with her many-

tucked petticoat, high-peaked mutch, and creel, will soon be a thing of the past. The tendency towards centralisation has been noted in the *Fishery Board Reports* for a year or two past. In the report for 1895 the reasons given are the 'proximity of the large ports to the fishing-grounds, the facilities for landing fish in good condition, and the rapid means of communication with the great industrial centres.' The report goes on to say that the 'larger boats are necessary owing to the increased demand for the better kinds of fish, which usually frequent only the off-shore grounds.' It will be seen from this remark that the yawls could never satisfy the increasing demand for fish-food, the exportation of which from Aberdeen has been promoted by the combined agencies of steam and electricity. In fact, without these modern miracle-workers the fish-trade could never have assumed its present magnificent proportions.

The 1,000,000 cwt. of fish, representing a money value of £400,000, which was the net result of last year's fishing at Aberdeen, would, had yawls been the only boats in use, for the most part have lived their lives unmolested at the bottom of the cold North Sea. In the report of the Board for 1896 are evidences of the same falling off, especially in the Aberdeen and Kincardineshire districts. 'Boats land their catches at Aberdeen,' is the usual report from east-coast villages; and under 'Findon' we find the sadly suggestive remark: 'The last of the Findon fishermen removed to Stonehaven' during the year. The proposal which has been made that the Fishery Board should erect harbours at small fishing villages does not commend itself to the judgment of those who have made fishery matters a subject of thoughtful consideration in view of the fact that, as last report truly says, 'fishermen of all classes will be certain to locate themselves at those ports where they can have the greatest facilities for landing their catches and disposing of them to the best advantage.'

It is only at large ports, such as Aberdeen, that daily supplies can be depended on to keep up the trade; and it is only large centres that can meet the demands for providing coals, stores, and ice, not to speak of the necessary repairs which are always wanted in connection with fishing-vessels, and which keep the builders busy. The depopulation of small villages and the overcrowding of large towns is regrettable; but in the fish trade it is inevitable.

One great difficulty in the way of the success of steam line-fishing is the supply of bait. It may not be generally known outside the industry that from the New Year on to September herring-bait is used on board the steam line-boats, the crews being supplied during the first three months with herring from some of the southern ports. From April till about September they take nets along with them, and fish for herring-bait for

themselves; during the remaining three months they have to use squid-bait. It has been abundantly demonstrated that there is no bait in this season equal to squid or ink-fish. These fish, or rather sea monstrosities, are brought up by the trawl in abundance, but are seldom, if ever, caught on the lines, which may be one reason for their scarcity. Another reason which is noted in the report is the migratory habits of the ink-fish. In this connection a singular fact was observed by the herring fishermen last season, which, it will be remembered, was a very disastrous one on the east coast. One of our most experienced curers, who resides for the most part in one of the towns on the Morayshire coast, remarked to the writer that last season squid were more plentiful than he had ever seen them all his time of curing, so that he thought it without precedent. He further said that when squid appear, herrings disappear; in fact, it was his experience on the west coast that it is certain death to the herring if squid appear. So much for the 'glorious uncertainty' of the fish trade. In the winter of 1896-7 the ink-fish were scarcely to be had for love

or money. Last winter (1897-8) they were plentiful, and bait was within the reach of all.

It is a fact worthy of notice that a few years ago ink-fish were thrown overboard as rubbish; now they are, when scarce, almost priceless; and even last winter the cost of bait was the heaviest part of the expenditure in connection with line-fishing. The previous winter the cost frequently exceeded the profits of the trip—a state of matters which could not go on. Various attempts have been made to find a substitute for squid-bait, but hitherto without success.

The failure of the Newfoundland imported squid last year will be fresh in the memory of those interested in fishery matters. There is no doubt that a fortune awaits the man who discovers a satisfactory substitute for squid-bait. Each hundredweight box of squid costs at least £2.

In conclusion it may be said that the line-fishermen, if they are to succeed in steam-vessels, must add enterprise and energy to their recognised industry, and, throwing aside class and traditional fads and superstition, endeavour to march with the times.

THE BIRTHDAY PEARL

By JOHN ARTHUR BARRY.

IT'S my birthday,' said Bob Panton, master and owner of the pearl-shell lugger *Daisy*, then lying at anchor off Somerset on her return from a trip about Torres Straits. 'It's my birthday,' repeated he, bringing out a 'square-face' of Hollands. 'We'll have a nip all round, and then we'll open a shell each, just for fun, and to see what sort of luck I'm to have this next year.'

The five blacks and the one other white man that constituted the *Daisy's* crew duly drank the skipper's health in half-pints; and then, laughing, each man chose the biggest oyster he could find—all about the size of soup-plates.

Four were blanks, and they all watched Abdallah, the new hand, as he slowly opened the great bivalve. Then came a shout as he presently held up a pearl, pear-shaped and almost as big as a hazel-nut, the finest gem on record yet found in those seas.

'Good luck indeed!' quoth Bob Panton as the chorus of admiration subsided, and, pulling out a bundle of ten dirty one-pound notes, he handed them over to Abdallah, saying, 'Take these for yourself, lad. I'll double it if this turns out as A1 as it looks.'

'And now I'll get up another square-face, and we'll wet the little stranger properly, and christen it the "Birthday Pearl." And they did so to such purpose that, bar Abdallah, there was no sober man on the *Daisy* by eight bells that night.

In the morning, when Captain Bob Panton came on deck, Abdallah was missing. So, as presently discovered, was the big pearl that Panton had left in a small wooden box in his berth. So was the *Daisy's* dingy that had been towing astern.

Bob Panton sold his shell, and offered a reward of £50 for the thief. But, though all the southern police were put on the *qui vive*, nothing could be heard of the Birthday Pearl nor of Abdallah. And at last there were people found who did not scruple to hint at birthday hallucinations, born of 'square gin,' on the part of Captain Bob and his crew.

But Panton took the matter to heart, and got on the spree; spent his shell-money, and more; sold his boat, pulled himself together, and started off in pursuit of Abdallah, with ever before his vision the virgin sheen of the great pearl, his for a few hours only, convinced that until he recovered it luck for him, either in this world or the next, was out of the question.

When old widower Wilhelm Itzig, the watch-maker and jeweller at Port Leichardt, died, his native-born son, Hermann, came home from a wandering life of droving and working upon stations, and, returning to the trade he had been taught, mended the Leichardt clocks and watches with an indifferent measure of success, being at best but a botch.

The little shanty, dignified with the title of

shop, stood apart from the rest of the township, and quite close to the beach. And but for an old tin sign, with upon it 'Hermann Itzig, working jeweller,' and an old clock and three empty watch-cases in the window, there was nothing to distinguish it from any of the other straggling 'humpies' that went to make up the nearly deserted Queensland seaport.

'How much, John?' Hermann was asking of a half-starved, unkempt-looking black man, a fortnight after the finding and losing of the Birthday Pearl, shining mildly now in the gloom of the stuffy little inner room of the shop by the beach.

'Won 'undreed, two 'undreed-feeetee, sar,' replied Abdallah, eyeing the gem as Hermann rolled it to and fro in the palm of his hand.

'Don't you wish you may get it, my boy,' replied Hermann, laughing. 'Ask a thousand whilst you're about it, John. Why don't you?'

'Ver' fine pul, sar,' replied Abdallah, cringing. 'Some day get mooch more dan t'ousan' for 'im.'

And young Hermann, although knowing little of such matters, thought, as he noted its soft lustre and flawless shape, that possibly his customer might be right.

His hand closed on the pearl. Said he, 'I'll give you twenty. Haven't got another cent anyhow'—which was the truth.

But Abdallah raised his eyes and hands to heaven in mute appeal at such an offer.

'You'll either take that or nothing,' said Hermann, suddenly producing a revolver and pointing it straight at the other's head. 'You stole it, you beggar; you know you did, up the coast somewhere—Thursday Island or Somerset, likely. Here, think yourself lucky to get so much.' And Hermann handed over four five-pound notes.

'Take them,' said he, seeing that the other made no motion, 'or I'll have you up to the police barracks in a quarter less than no time!'

There was murder in Abdallah's eye. But he put out his hand.

'Now clear straight out,' said Hermann. 'There's the *Barcoo* alongside the wharf. If you take my advice you'll get away in her. So long, old man!'

As he turned away, putting down the pistol, Abdallah sprang on him like a tiger, drawing his sheath-knife as he did so—for he was clad like any coasting sailor, in a suit of belted dungaree. Hermann reeled and fell, the knife descended again and again as Abdallah struck in his blind rage, and presently the body underneath him grew limp and motionless.

Rising and striking a match—for night was coming on, and the small room was nearly in darkness—Abdallah searched until he saw the Birthday Pearl lying near the bed, gleaming up at him out of a little pool of blood.

Wiping it on the blankets, also his knife, he turned and fled towards the long jetty where lay

the s.s. *Barcoo*, already clanging her second bell, a better man by twenty pounds than when he entered Leichardt that night, with a useless fortune in his pocket.

Next morning, somebody coming into the shop with a Waterbury to mend found Hermann lying senseless and nearly dead from loss of blood. None of the wounds, however, had touched any vital part; and a month in the local hospital restored him to health again. For reasons of his own, he had professed himself unable to give any description of the assassin. Illicit pearl-buyers on that coast were looked upon with great disfavour, for the reason that every inhabitant who could afford it had shares in some venture connected with the fishery—that is, the pearl-shell fleet. The pearls themselves were but a by-blow of the industry—conspicuous more by their rarity, except in the shape of almost worthless 'seed,' than anything else.

But the glamour of the big gem had entered into Hermann's soul, as it had into Pantan's and into Abdallah's; and presently, selling out his stock for a few pounds, he too moved on in pursuit, impelled, to boot, by a sharp feeling of revenge for loss of blood and money.

Meanwhile Abdallah, journeying southward, made no more attempts to dispose of his treasure. But, sewing it in a little bag of black calico, he hid it away artistically in the meshes of his thick hair, where with a touch he could assure himself of its safety. He was a man who had travelled far, and knew many things—knew more than Pantan or Itzig; but travel had not shut out inherent superstition. And he began to look upon the big pearl as a charm, an amulet, that, worn always, would protect him and bring him much good fortune. At various times, in the absence of any distinguishing marks of caste or dress, he had been taken for a Malay, a Hindu, and a Kanaka.

But Abdallah was none of these. He was an Arab from Muscat, who had in his time worked amongst the rotting oyster-heaps of El Bouruk on the shores of the Persian Gulf, had seen big pearls, and possessed a fair notion of their value. Hence he was well aware that he had a prize that would make a sensation in the world, and one whose owner would be unable to hide his light under a bushel—so far as the police, at least, were concerned.

Nor did he imagine for a moment that Pantan would sit down quietly under his loss. Of Hermann he thought no more—dead men tell no tales.

So he travelled round to Adelaide, thence by sea up Spencer's Gulf to Port Augusta, where he joined the camel-trains of Hafiz Khan, the rich Afghan who brought the wool down from the arid interior to the tall ships lying in the river.

Into Sydney shortly came Hermann Itzig, with

the desire for vengeance still hot, but purse low. His guarded inquiries soon let him into the knowledge that the police were on the watch, and had at least twenty men shadowed on suspicion, and waiting the arrival of Panton.

Seeing that so far as his own claim was concerned the case was hopeless, he gave it up. But not until he had satisfied himself that Abdallah was not in the city did he for a time relinquish the hope of getting even with him for that little matter of the knifing in the hut by the Leichardt beach.

Later, falling in with two of his countrymen bound for the West Australian goldfields, he joined them. The trio were lucky, and made each a fair pile. After a hurried visit to the Fatherland, which he left also hurriedly, convinced that for the Australian-born a military despotism was a most unsuitable form of government, Hermann Itzig, returning, bought a station 'up north' in South Australia, and after a while began to prosper considerably. But often to him came dreams of the big pearl, shining with its mild and tender light as he had last seen it—an episode in his life that, but for certain pains of frosty mornings, he might have almost come to regard as apocryphal. A stern, resolute man, he was incapable of forgetting an injury; and ever and anon, principally in the winter, he sent agents to work to hunt up Abdallah, meaning, when found, to deal with him after his own fashion.

But when a black man, or a yellow, chooses to hide himself amongst others of his colour, the search is apt to linger and become monotonous.

And so Bob Panton found it.

Received by the police with open arms and a whole tribe of dusky nomads—Manila-men, Kanakas, Javanese, men from the spurs of the Hindu Kush, others from the palm-groves of Kandy and the plains of Central India—he could identify none of them. The police had done their best, stimulated by the reward. But the vagueness of the description baffled them. There were so many black men with sharp aquiline features and good teeth, who spoke very little English, and usually wore European clothes. And at last they gave it up as a bad job. So also did the authorities in Melbourne and Adelaide, whither Bob Panton journeyed on his quest, with hopes growing weaker and weaker.

Superstitious in his way as Abdallah, he had quite made up his mind that unless he recovered his Birthday Pearl, no luck would ever again cross his path in this world nor, possibly, in the next; and, strong in his belief, he spent every penny he possessed in the fruitless search, finding himself at last 'on the wallaby' with a swag upon his back—he, Bob Panton, once master and owner of the smartest little lugger around Torres Straits.

Fain would he have returned once more to his old haunts on the Queensland coast; but he well knew how useless that would be, penniless as he was. And he had seen enough of beach-combing in his day, so had no stomach for that game.

And he worked about from station to station under an assumed name, with the splendid memory of his loss abiding ever upon him, until what preachers call the 'finger of Providence,' and lesser men 'luck,' brought him to Weetah, which was the name of Itzig's station, far to northward of the Burra.

Here there was a drought prevailing, and men were sinking wells. Panton knew little about the business; but, falling in with a mate who did, he took a contract to put a well down on an out-of-the-way part of the run known as the Sandalwood Ridge.

They struck water at a shallow depth, much to Itzig's delight. Then they built a hut for a shepherd and yards for the sheep, laid troughing, and made everything ready. And, just as they finished, there came a rainfall measurable in feet.

But Panton, in place of leaving, took other work on the run; whilst at Sandalwood the water stood undisturbed, and tall grass grew about hut and troughs, and the yards fell to decay, for nobody ever went that way now feed and water were so plentiful elsewhere.

Meanwhile Abdallah, earning good wages as a first-class driver, made money on the camel-train; and presently, leaving Hafiz Khan, he bought a tilted cart and two horses, and took out a hawker's license, and began life on his own account, secure in the strength and continuance of his luck.

He wore the pearl, now in a little leather bag, hung round his neck by a silver chain. And he worshipped it as his god. Nothing but good fortune had been his since the night he had sneaked into the *Daisy's* cabin whilst the drunken snores of her crew broke the still air, and taken the gem—his own: had he not found it?—from off the cabin table.

And ever since then had he not thriven—thriven until his outlandish signature was beginning to be known at the big bank in King William Street almost as well as that of Hafiz Khan?

And when at rare intervals he allowed his eyes to feast on the soft, lucent iridescence of the wonderful talisman, his belief grew stronger than ever that his *Kismet* was bound up therein; and that, compared to the power and magic of his treasure, Allah and all his works were as naught. And, indeed, Abdallah had long ago abjured the teachings of his Prophet, conforming to the demands of Australian inland civilisation in the matters of drinking rum, smoking, swearing, and

eating flesh, both clean and unclean, with the utmost indifference—exactly the same as any Christian.

So utter was his faith in the efficacy of the gem that if any slight mishap befell, such as the losing of his horses or the breaking of a spoke, he ascribed it to his inconsiderate attempt at Leichardt to get rid of it to the young man whose body had made a sheath for his knife. It was a punishment meted out to him by his divinity.

Many months passed away; he made money, and travelled far and wide. Then, in an evil hour for himself, he travelled still farther, and fell into a trap set, all unwittingly, for him by two men whom he had injured, and from which all the power of the Birthday Pearl was unable to save him. One hot summer day, making for Weetah head-station, he lost his bearings, and at sundown, he and his horses being parched with thirst, was very pleased to strike the Sandalwood Ridge, with its covered well of still water, sheltering hut, and abundance of feed.

'I think,' remarked Hermann Itzig to his overseer a month or two afterwards, 'that we may as well, perhaps, put a flock at the Sandalwood.'

'Very well, sir,' replied the overseer. 'I'll send Bray here out to do up the hut and yards.'

'I'll drive him out,' said Hermann. 'He's one of the men who worked there, isn't he? I want to have a look round. See that the big water-bag's on the buggy. I don't suppose the stuff in the well's any too good by this time.'

'What's that?' asked Itzig of Bray, *alias* Panton, as, at the end of their twenty-mile drive, they caught sight of something white and round close to the well.

'Tilted cart, I should say,' replied the other, peering under the flat of his hand.

As they drove up, two big eagle-hawks and some crows flew off the carcasses of a couple of dead horses.

Close to the door lay another corpse—that of a man—a man with strips of dry black flesh hanging from his bones.

'Great heaven!' exclaimed Itzig, 'what's the matter here?' But Panton made no answer. He was staring intently at the shrivelled features of the dead man. As he gazed he saw something shine from between the skeleton fingers of one clenched hand. Stooping, he drew it out with a cry of astonishment—the great pearl, Abdallah's god, appealed to in vain during his last agony.

'My pearl!' exclaimed Hermann.

'No—mine!' said Panton. 'My Birthday Pearl that Abdallah here stole from me!'

'Are you Panton, then?' asked Hermann.

'Yes,' replied Bob, 'I am. But what do you know about the matter?'

Then Hermann told his story, waiving all rights, if any belonged by reason of the wounds

that ached yet in the winter mornings. He could afford to. But what had killed man and horses?

There was a little water left in the bottom of the well-bucket. Hermann tasted it, shook his head, and spat it out. Alongside the bucket lay a native cat, dead. At the troughs, dry now, were others; also crows, all dead.

'I prefer our own water,' said he. 'Empty the whisky out of that bottle in the buggy, and fill it from the well. I'll fix this stuff up when we get home. That pearl's worth a lot of money. A good day's work for you. And for me too, perhaps, if my notion turns out correct. Copper's not so low as it was.'

Analysis disclosed the secret. The well had been bottomed on a very rich vein of copper ore. The water had become so impregnated with the mineral as to become highly poisonous. A thirsty man and thirsty horses might as well have drunk a strong decoction of arsenic.

It required a deal of persuasion to make Panton part with his pearl. Even as Abdallah, he was minded to make a fetish of the thing—it was so pure-looking, and shone with such a mild graciousness, that it seemed very hard to relinquish possession of it. Also, it was his birthday gift, and was bound to bring him luck.

But at last wiser counsels prevailed. Messrs Storr & Mortimer gave £2500 for it, and with this money Panton bought a partnership in Weetah. The lode at 'Poison Well' may be worked yet. At present prices it might pay. And what eventually became of the Birthday Pearl I know not. I note, however, that at the last London wool sales Messrs Itzig & Panton's clip averaged the top price of the season.

THE LATER FLOWERS.

THE elder's blooms are flat and fair;

The ox-eyed daisy's in the grass;

And shepherd's-rams, in meekness, stare

From every hedgerow as we pass;

While bees have mournful notes which tell

Of summer's fullness and farewell!

Ah me! I watched the shining hours,

From early crocus till the may

Was spent in whiteness o'er the bowers,

And gorses glorified the way!

Now later blooms of sadness stand

In pitying glory o'er the land.

How sober is the summer's prime!

How sad her close! How deep the fire

That heralds blossoms of the time!

Amid their glow we gain desire,

And pray that life's declining hour

May hold such wealth of fruit and flower!

WM. JOSEPH GALLAGHER.